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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1708
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 0540
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 8523
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 4661
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 4196
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 1370
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1942
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1915
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 8243
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 0788
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 002120

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DEA/WAGNER AND BERTSCH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2026
TAGS: [SNAR PREL](#) [PINR KCRM](#) [PGOV KE](#)
SUBJECT: RECENT COCAINE BUSTS HIGHLIGHT KENYA'S CONTINUING
DRUG TRAFFICKING PROBLEM

REF: A. NAIROBI 1560

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 72

Classified By: Political Counselor Michael J. Fitzpatrick for reasons 1
.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: A recent string of cocaine seizures at Nairobi's international airport highlights the continuing drug trafficking problem in Kenya, despite April's success in the verification and destruction of the record cocaine seizure. While the arrests of "mules" may have alerted trafficking syndicates that Kenya is no longer asleep at the wheel, the arrests have achieved little in the way of assisting authorities to identify the individuals behind the drug trafficking networks. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) In April, three individuals were arrested at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport after having been found in possession of varying amounts of cocaine. Two of the individuals arrived on flights originating from Nigeria, carrying 4.2 kilograms and 8.2 kilograms in their luggage respectively. The third individual arrived on a Kenya Airways flight from Amsterdam, where he transited from his initial flight originating in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and was found to have ingested 1.8 kilograms of cocaine. There have also been a continuing series of heroin arrests as well.

[1](#)3. (C) Police Anti-Narcotics Unit Head Ben Nyakwaka informed poloff May 3 that his office received intelligence indicating that a West African drug trafficking syndicate is using flights from the region to smuggle cocaine into Kenya. The three individuals were targeted upon their arrival, with one of the suspect's names having been previously provided to the customs and immigration officials as a suspected drug trafficker. Nyakwaka believes that the drugs were destined for other countries and not for domestic consumption within Kenya.

[1](#)4. (C) Nyakwaka claimed there is little evidence, based on arrest records, to indicate that the domestic use of cocaine is rising. Heroin and cannabis remain the preferred drugs of choice among Kenyans for their relative accessibility and low cost. According to Nyakwaka, cocaine is still too expensive

for widespread Kenyan use. He told poloff that "a serving" of heroine sells for approximately USD 2.10, while comparable amounts of cocaine sell for USD 7.00 and above. (NOTE: UK agents say the price for cocaine has dropped dramatically from more than USD 20,000 per kilo to USD 2,000-4,000 per kilo in the past year in Mombasa. Community and religious groups in Nairobi and on the coast all claim cocaine usage is surging amidst a supply glut. END NOTE.) Nyakwaka speculated that the cocaine smuggled in from Brazil via Amsterdam, may have been intended for clients in Mauritius or the Seychelles, where, he explained, demand was so great that cocaine can fetch a price comparable to that on the European market.

15. (C) Unfortunately, to date the three arrests have shed little light on those behind the drug trafficking networks. None of suspects provided much information on the people who gave them the drugs or more importantly who they were supposed to deliver the drug to in Kenya. Nyakwaka explained that these "mules" are kept in the dark about information which might jeopardize the traffickers' operations. Local press reports indicate that evidence collected from one of the suspects, a former Kenyan beauty queen, may implicate several former ministers, now Members of Parliament. Their telephone numbers (and names) were discovered in her mobile phone.

16. (C) When asked about possible evidence from the arrests which might implicate those connected to drug trafficking here in Kenya, Nyakwaka was silent on the matter of the politicians. But he did offer that several UK names and numbers were in the suspect's phone and that the information was shared with the British High Commission's Drug Liaison Office. He also told poloff that the former beauty queen provided the police with the name of a Nigerian national the

police have long suspected of being involved in drug trafficking. Nyakwaka reported that they "are looking for him" but expressed little optimism that the Nigerian would be located.

17. (SBU) Last year's numerous seizures at UK airports of small consignments (3-5 kg each) of cocaine connected to Kenya Airways flights fueled speculation that some of the one ton of cocaine in Kenyan government custody since its seizure in December 2004 was possibly being diverted to European markets. Preliminary testing of the cocaine seizure, performed in early April by a joint team of Kenyan and international (U.S., UK, and UNODC) experts, suggests these fears may have been unfounded (Ref A). The recent arrests of traffickers from West Africa may shed some light on the origin of the cocaine turning up in the UK. However, is it equally possible that the cocaine in the UK came from the same multi-ton shipment initially reported to the Kenyan authorities by Dutch intelligence in late 2004, of which mysteriously only one ton was actually seized. Or it may be coming from other, subsequent shipments traveling via the same network and channels.

COMMENTS

18. (C) COMMENT: While the recent arrests of the cocaine smugglers, covered extensively in the local press, sends a chilling message to would-be mules that the airport is no longer safe, it is only a matter of time until traffickers develop alternative channels to smuggle their drugs into Kenya. (NOTE: The border crossing with Uganda at Malaba is already, according to Nyakwaka, a preferred route for drug traffickers, with smugglers disembarking at the Entebbe Airport and then traveling overland into Kenya. END NOTE.) Additionally, the arrests beg the question of how often drug syndicates exploited the air routes before the Kenya authorities stepped up their airport drug interdiction efforts.

19. (C) COMMENT (Cont.): What is clear is that drug traffickers continue to find Kenya a favorable and convenient point of transit for their shipments and that the recent

arrests shed little light on who is behind the drug trafficking networks. Nor has there been any progress in identifying the individuals behind the historic one ton-plus of cocaine seized in 2004. The danger now is that the Kenyan authorities will be tempted to rest on their laurels, congratulating themselves for jobs well done, rather than: step up their customs screening procedures nationwide; intensify intelligence/police investigations into those behind or protecting drug trafficking rings at work here; and, bring to justice those responsible. END COMMENT.
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